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Training Programs for Veterinarians in Laboratory Animal Medicine

by Michael Schollmeyer* and Ronald E. Flatt**

For over a hundred years animals have been used for research in America. Until the 1920's little attention was given to the maintenance, husbandry, nutrition and diseases of experimental animals. Biological research workers have always realized the importance of maintaining high standards of quality in their research and in recent years these high standards have been extended to their experimental animals. It was recognized that good husbandry and nutrition, as well as freedom from naturally occurring diseases, were essential for production and maintenance of quality research animals. The desire for increased quality in research animals grew and medical schools were the first to be cognisant of the fact that veterinarians were the best qualified for this type of responsibility. As this type of thinking became established, many other institutions which maintained laboratory animal facilities also sought out the professional services of veterinarians. In the last 25 years with the expansion of the pharmaceutical industry, the recognition of many animal models for biomedical research and the passage of animal welfare laws, the need for laboratory animal veterinarians has increased dramatically.

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The National Academy of Sciences estimated that only 10-15 individuals are graduated each year from the programs of all institutions in the United States currently offering training to graduate veterinarians in the field of laboratory animal medicine. It was also estimated that in the next 10 years an additional 850 laboratory animal veterinarians would be needed.¹ This acute shortage of veterinarians in the laboratory animal medical field places their services at a premium.

A recent report from the Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources lists fourteen organized programs in the United States for training (Table 1).² Eight of the institutions offering these programs are medical schools, three are veterinary schools, one is a military program while the remaining two are located in a government laboratory and a Veterans Administration Hospital. Some of these programs lead to a M.S. degree while others offer certificates of completion. These programs last between two and three years. Graduates from these programs are qualified, after two years of practical experience, to be examined and certified by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine.

The content of the training programs vary; however, most contain courses in laboratory animal biology, statistics, pathology and diseases of laboratory animals, primatology, animal experimentation, on-

cology, surgery and genetics. On the job training is also an essential part of these programs.

Most programs carry a stipend of over \$6000 depending upon the number of dependents and experience of the trainee. A portion of the stipend is tax exempt.

Graduates in laboratory animal medicine frequently find positions in medical schools, pharmaceutical companies and veterinary schools. Their duties include procurement of animals, supervising routine care, providing veterinary care, planning research programs and performing experimental surgery. Laboratory animal veterinarians also have an opportunity to teach both professional and non professional students.

Although the laboratory animal medical field is developing rapidly and more veterinarians are needed, specialized training beyond the D.V.M. should be considered to adequately prepare a veterinarian who chooses to pursue this area of specialization.

Table 1.²

Current Laboratory Animal Medical Programs in the United States:

Aerospace Medical Division
USAF School of Aerospace Medicine
Brooks Air Force Base, Texas

Bowman Gray School of Medicine
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Division of Biological and Medical Research
Argonne National Laboratory
Argonne, Illinois

J. Hillis Miller Health Center
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Pennsylvania State University
Hershey, Pennsylvania

Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

Stanford University School of Medicine
Palo Alto, California

Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Tulane University School of Medicine
New Orleans, Louisiana

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri

Veterans Administration Hospital
Hines, Illinois

REFERENCES

1. Graduate Education in Laboratory Animal Medicine, Proceedings of a Workshop. National Academy of Sciences National Research Council. Pub. No. 1284, Washington, D.C. 1965.
2. Graduate Education in Laboratory Animal Medicine. Charles River Digest. Vol. VIII, No. IV. Oct. 1969.

Answers to Diagnostic Quiz

Answers

1. a
2. a, b, d
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. a
7. a
8. acute iridocyclitis
9. c